

Islam & Society

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**A DISCOURSE ON BELIEVERS' MUTUAL
CONNECTION IN ISLAMIC SOCIETY – *Excerpt*
from *Tafsir-al-Mizan***

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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1. Man and Society

There is no need to bring a lot of arguments to prove that mankind is a social species. Every member of this species is created with this instinct. Man has always lived in society, as the history says and the archaeological finds show (the finds that are related to the earliest eras when this species lived in and dominated this globe.)

The Qur'ān has described this reality in the best possible way in many verses. For example:

O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognized each other ... [49:13];

We have distributed among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, that some of them may take others in subjection ... [43:32];

... the one of you being from the other ... [3:195];

And He it is Who has created man from the water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage-relationship ... [25:54].

There are many other such verses.¹³

2. Man and the Growth of his Society

Human society, like man's any spiritual characteristics or its related factors, was not born - when it was born - in its complete and perfect shape; there was a lot of room for development and improvement. Like all other concomitants of humanity, the society too kept growing and improving with man's progress in his material and spiritual journey. It would

be unrealistic to expect this human characteristic to be different from other factors - to think that it would appear from the very beginning in its perfect shape. Rather it, like man's other characteristics related to his knowledge and will, has gradually progressed from the primitive to the advanced stage, and the process continues.

It appears from history that the first social group that appeared was the domestic circle based on marriage, because its natural agent (the procreative organs) was the most powerful factor in bringing people together. It was not, for example, like food gathering and eating which could be done alone. Satisfaction of sexual urge required union of two persons [and it laid the foundation of society]. From it gradually emanated the instinct which we have earlier called the instinct of exploitation. It takes shape when a man, dominating over and forcing another person, uses him to fulfil his [dominating one's] needs and plans.

Then it took the shape of headship or leadership, e.g., head of the family, patriarch of the clan, chief of the tribe, and president of the nation.

Naturally, in the beginning the leadership went to the strongest and bravest; after sometime it was given to him who was bravest and richest, and also had many children. Thus, the views kept changing until now it goes to him who is thought to be the most efficient in administration and the most expert in diplomacy and politics. This was the primary reason why and how idol-worship raised its head and why it

looks strong even today; we shall write about it in detail, God willing, somewhere else.

Social institution with all its manifestations (family as well as other groupings) has always existed with mankind since the dawn of humanity.

But man was not consciously aware of it in the beginning. It was there growing with man's other natural instincts and characteristics like exploitation, self-defence and things like that.

The Qur'ān informs us that it was the institution of prophethood which made the man aware of society and social bonds in detail and exhorted him to preserve and protect it as a distinct factor of humanity.

Allāh says: And mankind was naught but a single people, then they differed [10:19]. Also He says: Mankind was but one people; so Allāh sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed [2:213]. It shows that mankind in its earliest days was one nation, simple and uncomplicated; there was no difference among them. Then differences occurred and disputes appeared; so Allāh sent the prophets and revealed the books to them in order that it might remove the said disputes and differences, and bring them back to social accord and unity which in its turn would be protected through ordained laws.

Again Allāh says: He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nūh and that which We have revealed

to you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Īsā, that establish the religion and be not divided therein [42:13]. This verse too informs us that it was the call to establish the religion without being divided therein which removed the discord among the people and united them on one word. Thus, it was religion that had guaranteed the safety of their good social order.

As you see, the verse attributes this call (of society's good and unity) to Nūh who was the first prophet to be given a law and a book; then it ascribes it to Ibrāhīm, then to Mūsā, then to 'Īsā (peace be on them all).

The shari'ah of Nūh and Ibrāhīm contained very small amount of rules and regulations. Of the four prophets, the most elaborate was the shari'ah of Mūsā, which was followed by 'Īsā - as the Qur'ān says and the Gospels show - but the shari'ah of Mūsā contains only about six hundred rules, as has been reported.

In any case, the call to live in a society - a distinct and clear call - was not given except by the prophets in the mould of religion, as the Qur'ān clearly says and - as will be seen - the history confirms.

3. Islam and the Attention it gives to Society

Undoubtedly, Islam is the only religion which has purposely laid its foundation on human society, on community life. It has never neglected the social aspects in any of its affairs. If you want to know more, then look at the mass and volume of human actions and activities (which imagination cannot fully grasp) and their branching into various categories, classes and

orders and you will be really astonished to see how this divine shari'ah covers all those actions and activities, and gives direction for every conceivable situation. Then see how it has moulded all those rules and regulations in the mould of social life. Then you will realize how it has filled it with the spirit of communal life to the maximum limit.

Then compare your findings with every divine shari'ah to which the Qur'an has given any importance, that is, the shari'ah of Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa; and you will realize that those laws cannot bear comparison with Islam, they cannot stand at its side.

As for those systems which the Qur'an does not think worthy of consideration - like idolatry, Sabi'ism, Manichaeism, dualism, etc. - the difference is too clear to need description.

As for the groups and nations - be they civilized or otherwise - the history only says that they used to follow what they had inherited from ancient times - that social life gave rise to exploitation and people were united under autocratic or monarchic rules; tribal, national and regional societies lived under the domain of a king or chief, whose selection was governed by factors of heredity, place of origin and things like that. No nation was paid any particular attention in its affairs; no discussion was held or views exchanged to better their condition. Even the great nations which dominated the known world at the time when the divine religion illuminated the earth - i.e., the Roman and Persian empires - were nothing more than autocratic and despotic rules of Caesar and Khusraw; subject nation were "united" under the banner of

the king or emperor; and the society progressed if the empire developed; otherwise it regressed.

Of course, they had inherited some treatises on sociology, among the writings of their philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others.

But they were just papers which were never acted upon, merely mental images which never took shape outside imagination. The history that has come to us is the most reliable witness of what we have said.

Therefore, the first call that reached the human ear and invited this species to pay attention to the society's affairs - by making it an independent subject, taking it out from oblivion and insignificance - was the voice of the Prophet of Islam (on whom be the best blessings and peace). He invited the people, through the divine messages revealed to him, towards happy life and good living - all together. Allāh says:

And hold fast by the cord of Allāh all together, and be not divided, ...

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong. [Here Allāh draws men's attention to protect the society from division and disunity.] and these it is that shall be successful. And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidences had come to them [3:103 - 105];

And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it;

and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His way [6:153];

Surely they who divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them [6:159].

There are many other unrestricted verses which call the people to live together in society.

Also, Allāh says:

The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren [49:10];

... and do not quarrel, for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart [8:46];

... and help one another in goodness and piety ... [5:2];

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong [3:104].

There are many such verses that exhort the Muslims to build the Islamic society on the foundation of unity and harmony acquiring and protecting its spiritual and material benefits and distinction - as we shall later describe in short.

4. Relationship of Individual and Society in the Eyes of Islam

While manufacturing or inventing something, one first makes its elementary parts, each part has its own properties and effects. Then one joins them together - in spite of their separate identities - and obtains from the whole new benefits in addition to the sum total of the various parts' benefits. Man, for example, has parts, limbs, organs and powers, each of which has distinct material and spiritual benefits. Sometimes they are compounded, and are thus strengthened and enhanced, like the weight of each part and that of the whole, or its power and turning from one direction to the other, etc.

At other times the parts do not combine but continue as separate entities like the powers of hearing, seeing, tasting, will and movement; yet all these different parts are jointly placed under the control of one being, i.e., man. Then the benefit of the whole collection far exceeds the sum total of those found separately in various parts; they are immense benefits, like action and reaction, as well as the spiritual and physical uses. One of the benefits is the presence of this astonishing plurality within the framework of unity itself. When the human matter, i.e., the sperm and ovum completes its growth, it gets the power to separate a part from itself and bring it up as another perfect man, able to do all the spiritual and material activities the former man used to do. All human beings in spite of their vast number are human being, i.e., one; and their activities although plentiful in number are one in species; they are capable of uniting and joining. It is not unlike water - when put in various pots it is called many waters, but it is in fact one species; it has many properties but under one species; and the more water you gather in one place the more powerful are its characteristics and the far greater its impact.

Islam, in bringing up the individuals of this species and guiding them to their real happiness, looks at this real import of humanity; it could not do otherwise. Allāh says:

And He it is Who has created man from the water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage relationship [25:54];

O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female [49:13]; the one of you being from the other [3:195].

This real relationship between individual and society inevitably leads to another actuality in the society inasmuch as people individually feed it with their existence and powers, especialities and characteristics; thus the society itself - like its members - acquires a sort of independent entity and characteristics, and it is a fact known to and seen by every one. That is why the Qur'ān considers a nation as having an existence with an appointed term of its own; accordingly every nation has got a book; it has a perception and an understanding; it acts and obeys or disobeys Allāh.

Allāh says:

And for every nation there is an (appointed) term, so when their term is come they shall not remain behind (even) an hour, nor shall they go before [7:34];

... every nation shall be called to its book ... [45:28];

Thus have We made fair-seeming to every people their deeds ...

[6:108];

... there is a group of them keeping to the moderate course ... [5:66];

... there is an upright party; they recite Allāh's communications ...

[3:113];

... and every nation purposes against their apostle to destroy him, and they disputed by means of the falsehood that they might thereby render null the truth, therefore I destroyed them; how was then My retribution! [40:5];

And every nation had a messenger; so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly [10:47].

That is why you see that the Qur'ān pays attention to histories of nations as much as it does to individuals' stories - or even more. It did so at a time when the history was only a record of achievements or failures of kings and nobles. It was long after the revelation of the Qur'ān that the historians deigned to concern themselves with the histories of nations and societies. A few of them like al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn Khaldūn wrote on this line to a certain extent, until the changes were lately affected in narrative history and individuals gave way to the nations. Reportedly, the first [Westerner] to lay the foundation of the new history was Frenchman, August Kent (d. 1857 C.E.).

However, as we have said above, society's power and characteristics are necessarily stronger than those of an individual. In case of conflict or discord between the two, the former must overwhelm the latter. Perception and experience are best witnesses for this phenomenon - in active as well as passive powers and traits all together. A group's will in any matter, e.g., in crowds and mobs, cannot be restrained by any individual's contrary will or opposite intention. A part cannot escape from following the whole - it must proceed as the whole does. So much so that the whole suspends the individual member's perception and thinking. The same is the effect of general terror and common fright as, for example, at times of retreat, during riots and disorder, in aftermath of earth-

quake, in periods of famine or epidemic. Even some less frightening things have the same effect; for example, traditional rites or national attires and things like that, which an individual feels himself obliged to follow - they deprive him of his thinking power or perception.

It is for this reason that Islam has paid so much attention to the affairs of society. We do not find - and cannot find - such care and attention given to it in any other religion, nor in any civilized nation. (Probably you will find it difficult to accept!) The fact is that although individual is the foundation of society, giving only an individual a good upbringing and training him to be of virtuous character can hardly produce desired effect if the society is permeated with opposite atmosphere and environment. Only a negligible number can withstand such pressure and preserve their good character.

Thus Islam has built its most important rules and laws - like hajj, prayer, jihād, spending in the way of Allāh, and in short, the religious piety - on the foundation of social life. And how did it arrange to preserve it? Apart from the authority of Islamic government (which is responsible to protect the general religious ceremonies and their boundaries), and in addition to the obligation of inviting to good, enjoining virtue and forbidding evil (which is a common obligation for the whole ummah), it has prescribed an important goal for the Islamic society - and no society can survive without a common goal - and that is the true happiness and nearness to Allāh and honour in His presence.

This goal is an unseen but vigilant supervisor, from which even secret thought of man cannot remain hidden - let alone the manifest action - although the preachers and those engaged in enjoining good and forbidding evil may fail to see it. It is this reality which led us to declare that the care and concern shown by Islam to the affairs of its society excels all systems and cultures.

5. Is Islamic social System capable of Implementation and Continuation?

Someone may say:

"You claim that Islamic ideology for creating good society is the strongest in foundation and loftiest in structure, and even the societies evolved by the advanced and civilized nations cannot reach its standard.

Well, if it is so, then how is it that it could not be implemented except for a very short period, and then it changed into blatant despotic rule? Did it not turn into an imperialism more atrocious and horrid than all that had preceded it? Compare it with the Western civilization that is so enduring.

"This in itself is a proof that their civilization is more advanced and their culture and tradition more vital and sound. They have laid the foundation of their social order and legal system on the people's will and their natural inclination. They give credence to the will and resolve of the majority, because usually it is impossible for the whole community to achieve unanimity on any matter; and dominance of majority is a perpetual natural phenomenon. We find that every natural cause and physical source succeeds in bringing about the effect in

majority of the cases - not always. The same thing happens when diverse and conflicting causes act on one thing - only the majority succeeds in affecting the object, neither all causes nor the minority has any effect. Therefore, it is proper that the structure of social order be built on the majority's will, and it should apply to the goal of the society as well as to the systems and laws enforced therein. As for the hypothesis of religion, in the present world it is nothing but a wishful thinking that does not pass the stage of theory, an intellectual ideal that cannot be put into practice.

"The modern civilization, in the countries where it has taken root, guarantees the power and felicity of the society, purifies its members and cleanses them from evil traits and bad characteristics, i.e., the things which the society does not approve, like falsehood, fraud, injustice, oppression, rudeness and things like that."

The above contains a gist of what preoccupies the minds of a group of our oriental scholars, and especially some of our eminent sociologists and psychologists. Unfortunately they have taken a wrong way to approach the subject, and it has caused confusion in their minds, as will be seen from the following explanation:

They have said: The Islamic social order - unlike the modern civilization - cannot be implemented in the world in its present environment; it means that the situation prevalent in today's world is not propitious for the laws legislated by Islam.

COMMENT: Agreed. But it proves nothing. Every system now prevalent in various human societies came into being after it was not there; it appeared when the then prevalent conditions and surroundings were against it; then it stood up and struggled against the previously deep-rooted system. Often it was repulsed and defeated in the first attempt; then it rose again and again until finally it gained upper-hand, triumphed and got dominance over the society. Sometime it perished and became extinct if the conditions and factors were not favourable. History testifies to it regarding every religious and temporal system, not excepting democracy and communism.

¹⁴ It is such instances that the divine words point to: Indeed there have been example [lit., systems] before you; therefore travel in the earth and see what was the end of the rejecters [3:137]. The verse implies that the systems accompanied by rejection of divine commands do not have a happy ending, do not take one to a desirable goal.

Therefore, merely the fact that a system is not agreeable to, or goes against the current social environment does not prove that it is wrong or erroneous. In fact, this is a well-established natural phenomenon through which every new idea and event reaches its final goal, after various actions and reactions, as a result of interaction of diverse causes and factors.

Islam is not exception to this principle; it like all other systems is governed by the same physical and social factors in its progress or retrogress, and is influenced by the same agencies and conditions.

Islam's position today - when it has captured the hearts of more than four hundred million people ¹⁵ - is not weaker than it was in the days of Nūh, Ibrāhīm or Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). Each of them began his call alone, while the world in their times knew nothing except disorder and depravity. Then their message spread, took roots and became a living phenomenon that continues upto these days of ours.

The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) began his mission while there was none to support him except a man and a woman ¹⁶; later people joined them one after another; the days were full of privation - and what a privation it was! Then came to them the help from Allāh and they established a good social order; a society whose members were - for a major part - governed by goodness and piety; until after the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) the strife and intrigues did to the Islamic society what they did.

It did not take long for even such a small model of Islamic social order, in spite of its short life and narrow range, to spread itself, in less than fifty years, from one corner of the Earth to the other; it turned the history of mankind to a new direction, and brought a fundamental and substantial change in it, whose overwhelming effects are seen even today - and will continue to do so for ever.

Sociological and psychological discourses within the framework of ideological history cannot escape from admitting that the immediate and sufficient cause of the world's contemporary advancement is none other than the Islamic civilization and the light it spread over the Earth. Of course,

most of the European scholars have neglected to give Islam its due credit, for which we may thank either religious prejudice or political expediency. How can a knowledgeable research scholar, looking at modern civic and social progress, say with justice that it was a contribution of Christianity? How can Christ (a.s.) be counted as its leader and standard-bearer, when he himself clearly says ¹⁷ that he was concerned only with spiritual affairs and had nothing to do with body or its affairs, and did not care about governmental and political affairs? While Islam clearly invites towards social life and mutual cooperation, and guides about and manages all aspects of human society and its members without exception. Why do the Westerners shut their eyes from this manifest reality? To what should we ascribe this silence of theirs, if not to their desire to extinguish the light of Islam (while Allāh refuses but to perfect His light) and to put out its flame from the hearts by their envy and enmity - so that they could present Islam as a nation which has left no imprint on modern civilization?

However, Islam has proved its ability to guide the mankind to their happiness and their good lives. Such a phenomenon cannot be dismissed as a hypothesis inapplicable to human life. Nor can it lose hope of one day dominating the world (inasmuch as its objective is the mankind's true happiness). We have already mentioned ¹⁸ in the Commentary of the verse, Mankind was but one people ... [2:213], that deep research in the conditions of creation leads us to the conclusion that the human species will surely reach its destination and achieve its goal - and it means the total domination of true

Islam over the world, its complete authority over the social order. Allāh has promised, according to this very principle, in His Mighty Book: ... then Allāh will bring a people that He shall love Him, humble before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allāh's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer ... [5:54]; Allāh has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them successors in the earth as He made successors those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall worship Me, not associating aught with Me [24:55]; that the earth, shall inherit it My righteous servants [21:105].

There is another dimension to this question which these people are totally oblivious of. The motto of Islamic social system is to follow the truth in theory and practice; while the ideal of today's civilization is to follow the views and desires of the majority. This basic difference in outlook has resulted in difference in the aims and goals of the respective societies. The goal of Islamic society is the real and rational happiness and felicity. It means that man should practise moderation in giving his various powers their demands; he gives to his body what it desires but to the extent that it does not hinder him from knowing Allāh through the path of servitude; rather it becomes a means of reaching that destination. In this way, man attains happiness through the happiness of all his powers and faculties. It is the greatest Comfort (although today

we do not fully perceive it because we lack the proper Islamic training). That is why Islam has laid the foundation of its commandments on wisdom and intellect which by its nature follows the truth and reality; and it has very strongly prohibited all that disturbs the healthy intellect. It has laid the responsibility of enforcing all activities, moral and basic gnosis on the shoulders of the society. It is in addition to what the Islamic government is expected to do, like enforcing the penal code, etc. This aspect in any case would not be palatable to the general public. Such ideal would be intolerable to those who are astonishingly immersed in their desires and lusts - as we see today in all classes of society, be they affluent or hard pressed. Islamic system based on wisdom and intellect curbs people's freedom of enjoying whatever pleasure they like, whatever entertainment they desire, of attacking or devouring whom they are angry with. Naturally people would not like such restrictions, such limitations, except after intense efforts and tireless endeavours for spreading the message, and after intensive and extensive training given to the people; it is not different from other development affairs in which man needs firm determination, sufficient training and never ending vigilance.

On the other hand, the goal of the modern civilization is material enjoyment. Obviously it encourages a sensual life that follows heart's desire - no matter whether it conforms with rational truth or not. It follows intellect only when it does not go against its desires or ambitions.

That is why today's law follows, in its legislation and implementation, the pleasure of the majority of society and the desire of their hearts. Apart from that, only those laws may be guaranteedly implemented that are concerned with overt actions. But as far as ethics and fundamental gnosis are concerned, there is no way of enforcing them; people are at liberty to adopt or reject them - except when these factors go against the law of the land, as then they are expressly forbidden.

Consequently, such a society would be wont to do what falls in line with its desire like base lust and inordinate rage. Such people would prefer most of the things condemned by religion; they would take good morals and high spiritual knowledge as mockery, shielding themselves behind "constitutional freedom".

As a result of this phenomenon the ideology is bound to change its course from rational to sensual. What the wisdom treats as immorality and depravity, is glorified by sensual outlook as chivalry, manhood and good manners. Look at what is happening in Europe between the youths, between men and married or unmarried women, between women and dogs, and between men and their own daughters or other women within prohibited degrees; look at what is done in festivities and dance parties, etc. - the things which a person brought up in religious atmosphere feels ashamed even to bring on his tongue.

Sometimes religious rites appear in these people's eyes as odd curiosities and laughing matters - and vice versa. This is

because the thinking and perceptions are completely different in their essence as well as in modality. These social orders based on sensuality take no benefit from intellect - as you have seen - except for paving the way for sensual enjoyment. This enjoyment is their only goal; nothing is allowed to oppose it, nothing can stand in its way - except when one has to choose between two enjoyments of equal degree. After all there were - and still are - among the legislated laws things like suicide and duel, etc. One gets what he wants and desires except when it is in conflict with the will and desire of the society.

Ponder on this difference; then you will understand why the western social order - unlike the religious one - seems more agreeable to the human society. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that it is not only the present day's western social order that has proved consistent with people's nature (so that it may be given preference over other civilizations for this reason); all the social systems which were or are found in any society, from the early dawn of humanity to this day of ours, right from roaming nomads to the flourishing settlements, had and have one thing in common: People give preference to them over the religion that invites them to reality and truth; it is their first reaction when they are called to the true religion - because they are enthralled by material idolatry.

If you ponder deeply you will find that the modern civilization is nothing more than a collection of various customs of early idolatry; but it has "progressed" from individual to col-

lective level, from the stage of simple rites to that of technical finesse.

What we have said - that the Islamic social order is based on following the truth and reality, not on conformity with hearts' desires - is amongst the clearest declarations of the Qur'ān. Allāh says:

He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth ... [9:33];

And Allāh judges with the truth [40:20];

(Also He says commending the believers) ... and enjoin on each other truth ... [103:3];

Certainly We have brought you the truth, but most of you are averse to the truth [43:78].

Here it is clearly stated that truth is not agreeable to the majority and their desires. Then Allāh totally rejects the idea that the majority's will should be followed. Why this rejection? Because it results in depravity and destruction. Allāh says: Nay ! he has brought them the truth, and most of them are averse from the truth. And should the truth follow their desires, surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have perished. Nay! We have brought to them their reminder, but from their reminder they turn aside [23:70 - 71].

Have a bird's-eye view of the world history; see the manmade calamities taking shape one after another; chaos and disaster, depravity and iniquity piling up one over another. Then you will appreciate how true the divine words have proved. Allāh again says: ... and what is there after the truth but error, how are you then turned back? [10:32]. There are

many many verses of this or similar theme. If you want to gain more insight then study Chapter 10, Yūnus, where “the truth” [and its derivatives] have been mentioned more than twenty times.

They have said: To follow the majority is a regular trait of the nature.

COMMENT: No doubt that the nature follows its major effects; but it never nullifies or contradicts the obligation of following the truth and reality. Nature itself is a truth. How can it negate its own self?

For proper understanding of this statement, a few premises should be explained here:

First: The external things and affairs, which are found outside man’s imagination, are the basis of his cognitive beliefs and practical ideas; in their genesis and development, they depend on the system of causality - a permanent and all-encompassing system that allows no exception. All knowledgeable thinkers are unanimously agreed on this fact, and the Qur’ān too testifies to its truth as we have described earlier ¹⁹. Such external happenings appear and continue without fail [following their sufficient cause]. Even the effects appearing in majority of cases are - from the point of reason - permanent in their majorityness. For example, fire that - looking at all its uses - brings heat most of the times, its “heat-giving in majority of cases” is its permanent property. Likewise there are other examples; and this is the truth.

Second: Man by nature follows what he finds in any way a real external thing or affair. He follows the truth by dictate of

nature. Even those [agnostics] who deny definite knowledge, if you tell one of them something which he has no doubt about, he will surely accept it.

Third: Truth, as you have seen, is an external thing which man accepts in belief and follows in deeds. Man's own views or perceptions are just a means to reach that external truth - as mirror is a means to see the image.

Now that you have understood these premises, it should be clear to you that truth or reality, i.e., something's happening in nature in all or majority of the cases, is an attribute of an external thing that exists outside imagination and happens always or in most of the cases; but it is not knowledge or perception. In other words, truth is attribute of a thing that is known, not of the knowledge itself. A thing that occurs always or in majority of cases is in a way the truth. But the view of the majority of the people, or their aspiration or belief, vis-a-vis, that of the minority, is not always truth. It may be truth - when it conforms with reality; or it may be falsehood if it does not. In the latter case, man should not submit to it; nor would he do so if he became aware of its falsity. When you were sure of a thing and then all the people said you were wrong, you would not accept their view; and even if you made a show of submitting to them, you would do so only out of fear, embarrassment or some other factor - but not because you believed their view to be correct. The following verse is one of the best statements to show that the majority's views and opinions were not necessarily truth that must be followed: Nay! he has brought them the truth, and most of them are

averse from the truth [23:70]. If every opinion of the majority were truth, they would not have been averse or opposed to it.

The above discourse shows clearly the untenability of the argument that to follow the majority is the dictate of the nature. This natural system applies to external happenings and things - which are subject of knowledge - not to the knowledge or thought itself. According to this principle, man should follow in his intention and action that which happens - externally - most of the times; not that he should follow what a majority of the people believes. In other words, his activities and actions should be based on the good of the majority; and it is the principle upon which the Qur'ān has based its legislations and ordinations. Allāh says: Allāh does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you, so that you may be grateful [5:6]; ... fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard (against evil) [2:183]. There are many other verses that describe the underlying reasons of given orders which are found in most of the cases.

They have said: The modern civilization has provided the developed countries with society's happiness, has refined its members and purified them from evil characteristics which are disapproved by the community.

COMMENT: This talk is not free of confusion and medley. Probably when they say "society's happiness", they mean its superiority in technology and power, its exploitation - to the maximum - of natural resources. But you have repeatedly

seen that Islam does not count it as happiness and felicity. Rational arguments too support this principle. Mankind's happiness is in fact a combination of the felicity of the spirit and that of the body. This bestows on man the material bounties, and at the same time adorns him with excellent character and true divine gnosis. It is the felicity that guarantees to him his happiness in this life and in the hereafter. If one submerges oneself in material enjoyments and ignores spiritual felicity, then it is nothing but infelicity, unhappiness.

As for their marvelling at the good characteristics - like truth, sincerity, trustworthiness and fine manners, etc. - which they find in the people of advanced countries, again they are confused. The trouble is that most of our oriental scholars are unable to think in a collective framework, to look at a society as a social unit; they look at an individual as an individual, and that is that. They see a man and think that he is a being who is independent of all things and has no such connection with anything as to affect his independent existence. (But the reality is otherwise.) Also, when such a scholar thinks about his life, his only aim is to gain benefits for himself and ward off harms from himself. He is always involved in his own affairs - and it is individualistic thinking. Then he weighs others with the same measure and decides that they too are individualistically independent.

Such judgment can be true, if at all, about that man only whose thinking is individualistic. But it cannot be applied to a person who is conditioned to think in the framework of society: he considers himself an inseparable part of his society,

who has no existence separate from it; his benefits are a part of his society's benefits; the society's good is his good; and its harm, is his harm; every attribute and condition of the society is his own attribute and condition. Such a man thinks in an entirely different way. When it comes to establishing relations with other persons, he only concerns himself with relations outside his society; as for relations with other parts of the same society, he does not care in the least.

Let us give you an example. Man is a compound, made of numerous limbs and faculties, all of which are combined together to give them a real oneness which we call "humanity". This makes them merge their separate identities and actions in the man's independent existence. Eyes, ears, hands and feet, see, hear, attack and walk for the man; each of these organs enjoys its activity when the man enjoys it. Each of them aspires to establish contact with some separate identity whom the man wants to link with - either with good intention or bad. Eyes, ears, hands or feet want to do good or bad to him whom the man wants to do good or bad. But as for the organs' own mutual relation and contact - when all of them are under the banner of one human being - seldom does one of them any harm to any other, nor is any of them discomforted by any other.

This is then the condition of the parts of a man, and theirs is one unified collective progress. The same is the position of individual members of a human society when their thinking is moulded in collective mould. Their good or evil, piety or de-

pravity, benevolence or malevolence are one with those of the society when looked at as one single identity.

The Qur'ān has done the same when it has judged various nations and groups whose thinking, because of their religious or national prejudice, was moulded in collective mould, like the Jews, the Arabs, and a number of ancient nations. Thus, you will find it censuring the present generations for the sins of their progenitors, blaming the contemporary groups for the misdeeds of their predecessors. All this because it is a fair and true judgment regarding those who think in a collective way. The honoured Qur'ān has so many verses of this theme that it is not even necessary to quote them.

Of course, justice demands that if there be some good people in that same society, their due rights should not be suppressed. Although they live in that corrupted social order and mingle with their compatriots, their hearts are not pulluted by their society's evil thinking and widespread inner sickness. They are in it but - like extra limbs - are not a part of it. The Qur'ān has taken the same view when, in middle of general censure, it excepts good and righteous persons.

It is clear from the above description that while deciding about the goodness or badness of the members of advanced civilized societies - in contrast to those of other nations - one should not see as to how they live with one another, how they deal with their compatriots, how in short is their internal life. Rather, one should look at their collective personality as it shows itself when they deal with other weaker nations, as they behave with other collective societies of the world. It is this

criterion that should be kept in mind when one wants to judge the worth of a society - its goodness or badness, its felicity or infelicity. It is from this angle that our scholars should approach the subject. After that they are at liberty either to admire that social order or to be scandalized by it.

By my life, if a thoughtful observer looks at the history of their collective life since the European renaissance, and ponders on what they have done to other poor helpless nations .and tribes, he will at once realize that these people (who supposedly are full of mercy and sincerity for mankind; who serve the humanity with their lives and properties; who have bestowed freedom and given helping hand to oppressed and suppressed nations; and who have abolished slavery and bondage) have no other goal except subjugating weak and poor nations as long as they can, by any method at hand. One day it is done through military campaign, another day by colonial intrigues; some day it is by outright annexation, on other occasions in the guise of suzerainty; one day they establish themselves in the name of guarding the joint interests, another day on the pretext of helping to preserve the independence; sometimes they establish foothold in the name of peace-keeping or repulsing a danger, at other times to defend the rights of deprived and dislodged groups; and so on and so forth.

Healthy human nature does not agree to treat such societies as good ones, nor to praise them as happy ones - even if we shut our eyes from the meaning given to happiness by religion, revelation and prophethood.

How can human nature agree to this paradox? It equips all its members equally with all faculties; then how can it contradict its own decision and give some men a charter to own the others? An ownership that gives the "owners" authority on lives, honour and properties of the "subjects", and paves the way for them to play with their (the subjects')

lives and existence, to control their perception and will? And all this savagery to a degree not seen or experienced even by primitive men? For reference you should study the history of these nations and have a look at what present generation is suffering on their hands. If such a situation is called happiness and goodness, it could only be in an ironical and sarcastic sense.

6. What is the Basis of Islamic Society? How it lives on?

Society - of any type - comes into being when a common goal and ambition unites its individual members. That goal is a single spirit spread throughout the society that makes it one entity. In non-religious societies that goal is man's worldly life seen collectively - not individualistically - i.e. collective enjoyment of the advantages of physical life.

What is the difference - in characteristics - between collective and individualistic enjoyments? If man is able to live alone, he will be unhindered, unrestricted, in all his enjoyments; there will be nothing to oppose or prevent him. The only restriction will come from the limitations put by his own limbs. For example, he cannot breathe in all the air in atmosphere - even if he wants to - because his lungs are not so big; he cannot take the food except to a certain amount, because

his digestive system would not tolerate it. The same applies to other faculties and limbs that restrict each other's activities. But, as we have supposed that there was no other human being to demand share in exploitation of natural resources and benefits, there would be nothing to put restriction on his activities or to hinder him in his desires and actions.

But the position is different for a man living in a society. If he were to act without any restraint, with a will of his own, it would create friction and collision, life would become intolerable and the mankind would perish. (We have fully described it under the discourse of Prophethood.²⁰)

That is the only reason that leads people to the rule of law in society.

But uncivilized societies do not consciously realize its need; they just follow their customs and traditions which in their turn give rise to discord and quarrel among the members; thus all of them feel obliged to observe some rules that could give some protection to the society. As those laws are not based on a solid foundation, they are liable to imperfection and nullification, alteration and invalidation.

On the other hand, civilized societies base their laws on solid foundation - according to their degree of progress and advancement.

Through those laws they remove the discord and difference appearing in the society's intentions and activities, inasmuch as they put some restrictions and limits on them. Then they concentrate the power and authority in a centre which is

given responsibility to enforce the law and implement its provisions. It appears from the above that:

First: Law, in fact, is the factor that moderates people's desires and actions, by putting limitations on them and thus removing the sources of discord and difference.

Second: The society governed by law allows its members complete freedom in matters not covered by the law; and it is as it should be, because man has been equipped with perception and will, and once these factors are moderated further restriction is uncalled for. That is why modern laws do not care about divine knowledge or ethics. Consequently, these two important things appear to the people in the shape given to them by the nature of law. They have to compromise and conform with the law - as its dependent. Thus sooner or later they turn into external rituals devoid of inner purity. Also, it is for this reason that we see the politics playing with the religion: one day it (politics) decides against religion and makes it illegal; another day it relies on it and goes to the extreme to keep its banner aloft; a third day leaves it alone in benign neglect.

Third: This system is not free from defect. Although the society has given an individual or some individuals responsibility to enforce the law, yet ultimately there is no guarantee that it would be enforced. If the person who has final power and authority deviates from truth, and changes the collective power into personal hold; and ignores or nullifies the law to establish his own rule over mankind, then there will be nothing to subdue this despot or to bring him back to the path of

justice. There are countless examples of this phenomenon even in this time of ours, this age of culture and civilization - let alone the historical proofs of earlier days.

Add to this defect another shortcoming: Many is a time when the executive authority remains completely unaware that law had been broken. Or, the criminal manages to go out of its jurisdiction.

Now, we come back to our original topic: A society is held together by a single shared goal, i.e., enjoyment of this worldly life's advantages. It is what general public calls happiness. But from Islam's point of view, human life has a much wider circle than this worldly life - it encompasses also the life hereafter which is the real life. Islam knows that nothing will be of any use in that next life except divine gnosis - all of which is concentrated in monotheism. Also it realizes that this knowledge cannot be preserved or protected except through noble moral values and by purifying the self from all base traits. It recognizes that these meritorious characteristics cannot be completed and perfected unless man lives in a healthy society which relies on divine worship, which submits to the demands of Allāh's Lordship, and wherein each member deals with all others according to social justice. In short, from Islamic point of view the unifying goal on which human society is based is the religion of monotheism; it has the same principle of monotheism. It has not stopped - in this legislation - at merely moderating the intentions and actions; rather it has completed it with the acts of worship and added to it true divine knowledge and noble moral traits.

Thereafter, it gave the responsibility of its enforcement first to the Islamic government and then to the whole society. The latter would do it through good training in knowledge and practice and by enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

One of the most important aspects of this religion is the fact that all its parts, all its components, are so well-knit together that the whole constitutes one perfect unit: The spirit of monotheism permeates all the virtuous characteristics and ethics which this religion invites to; and the spirit of good character is spread throughout the deeds which the society members are obligated to perform. Thus all the components of Islamic religion, in final analysis, return to monotheism; and monotheism on exoteric level become noble ethics and good deeds. When monotheism comes down, it becomes ethics and deeds; and when they ascend, they become monotheism. To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up [35:10].

Question: The objection laid down against civil laws (when, for example, the executive authority refuses to implement them or fails to detect the law-breakings) may also be brought against Islam with equal force. Its clearest proof may be seen in the present condition of Islam, when it has become so enervated that it has lost all its grip over the society. The reason here too is the same: There is no one who could enforce its tenets among the people - even for a day.

Reply: What is the reality of law in general, be they divine or man-made? They are only imaginative forms in people's minds, some cognition retained in hearts. It is by appropriate

human will that they are implemented and thus perceived and observed. Obviously, if the will is lacking, nothing can be found to apply the laws to. The same is the case of those factors which maintain the relation of this will with law's enforcement - in order to preserve and strengthen the law. However, secular laws are concerned with no more than connecting the actions with intentions of the majority; but they do not care to arrange for preservation of that intention. As long as the intention is alive, perceptive and active, the law is implemented. But if that will die (because of deterioration in the people's spirit, or decrepitude eating away the society's structure); or if it was alive but was bereft of perception and cognition (because the society was submerged in vain distractions, or inordinately involved in luxuries and material enjoyments); or even if it was alive and perceptive but became ineffective (because some other stronger power imposed its own will over that of the majority); in all these situations the nation would not attain its ambition of enforcing the law and protecting the society from destruction and annihilation. The same would be the case in the events like secret crimes which the executive could not detect; or which it cannot deal with - like the events occurring outside its jurisdiction. The discords and splits appearing within European nations after the World Wars I and II give a clear picture of this syndrome.

This breakdown of laws and destruction of society occurs only because society does not care to establish the real factor that preserves the nation's will and keeps it strong and dominant - and it is the high morality, the noble character. The na-

tion's will, in its survival and continuation of existence, gets support from relevant characteristics only - as is explained in psychology. If the nation's traditions and applied laws are not based on sound foundation of high morality, they would be like an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface, that has no stability.

Ponder, for example, on the appearance of communism. It is but a natural child of democracy; it came into being because some classes of the society were extremely opulent while the others were totally deprived. There was a huge distance between the two extremes; on one side was cruelty and oppression, on the other was growing impatience and accumulated hatred and rage. The same happened in the World Wars, coming one after the other, and the third is waiting on the side to pounce on humanity any moment. It has undermined the earth and destroyed the tilth and the stock; and it did not, and does not, have any reason except the "civilized and advanced" nations' arrogance mischief and greed.

On the other hand, Islam has laid the foundation of its traditions and laws on morality and has put utmost efforts in training the people in noble character, in order that it may ensure that the laws shall be enforced practically. This noble moral character is with the man in secret and in open, in private and in public; it does its duty and discharges its responsibility - far better than any guarding police, more effectively than any other authority that engages itself in maintaining the law and order.

Of course, the educational institutions in these countries try to train the people in meritorious characteristics, and vigorously exhort the people to it. But it proves of no use.

First: The only fountain-head of evil traits is extravagance and inordinate material enjoyment on one side and extreme deprivation on the other. The civil laws have given the people unrestricted freedom in this respect; it has provided one class with all privileges and left the others destitute. In this background, is not the call to sublime morality a call to two mutually contradictory things? An attempt to join two opposites?

Moreover, as you have seen, these nations have adopted a collective thinking. Their societies even today endeavour their utmost to oppress weaker societies and trample on their rights; they exploit these poor nations' resources, subjugate their people, and dictate their own decisions to them to the utmost possible extent. What is this call to goodness and piety - with these characteristics? Is it not a self-contradicting call that could bring no result?

Second: Even sublime morality needs - for its continuation and preservation - a guarantor to protect it and keep it alive; and there can be no guarantee for it other than monotheism, i.e., the belief that there is one God for the universe, Who has beautiful names; He has created the creatures in order that they should attain to their perfection and happiness; He loves good and virtue, and dislike evil and mischief ; He will surely gather all for deciding between them and awarding them their recompense; thus He will reward the good-doer for his good deeds and punish the evil-doer for his evil.

Obviously, if you remove the belief in the Day of Judgment, there would be no genuine reason why one should not follow one's desires, why should one desist from material enjoyments and physical lust. The human nature wants and demands what a man himself desires, not what would benefit someone else - except when the other person's desire somehow becomes this man's. (Think over it properly.)

Suppose a man desires something that he cannot obtain without trampling on someone else's rights. There is nothing to restrain him, no judge to punish him, no censurer to censure him and no reprove to reprove him. Now, what hindrance is there to stop him from committing the crime and perpetrating the injustice, no matter how serious and heinous it might be? As for some imaginary restraints (and often scholars are misled in this matter!), like patriotism, love of humanity, exalted commendations or things like that, they are merely heart's inclinations and inner feelings; there is nothing to sustain them except education and training - and that too is not based on any solid reason. Thus these things are just conventional attributes and common occurrences; there is no guarantor to prevent their obliteration. Why should a man sacrifice his life in order that someone else might live after him, when he believes that death is complete annihilation and total extinction? As for the exaltation and praise, it depends on others' tongues; and how can he enjoy it after he has sacrificed himself and become "nothing"?

In short, no thinking person can deny that man would never opt for a deprivation whose recompense would not reach

him, whose benefit would go to someone else. As for the promise in such situations that his good memory would remain alive for ever and he would "enjoy" eternal wonderful praise, it is just a deceit and delusion in which he allows himself to be entrapped. It is self-delusion that lets him think that even after death and extinction his condition would be the same as before death; that he would know about and enjoy the good things told about him after his death. But surely it is nothing except self-deception, a fantasy of imagination. His condition is not unlike a drunk man driven by his emotions; he pardons his enemies, offers his life and honour, wealth and prestige, for causes which he would never approve of, if he were in his senses; but he is drunk and unable to understand, and therefore thinks that it is heroism - while in fact it is nothing but foolishness, madness.

Man cannot safeguard against this or other such misjudgments and blunders except through belief in monotheism mentioned above. That is why Islam has built the noble character (which is an integral part of its ordained laws) on the foundation of monotheism - a concomitant of which is the belief in the Day of Judgment. If a man believed in these realities, he would feel bound to do good and abstain from evil, wherever and in whatever situation he might be, whether anybody knew of his action or not, whether anyone praised him or not, whether or not there were someone to exhort him to do it or not to do it. He would know that Allāh was with him, the Knower, the Preserver, Who watched what every soul was doing; he would also know that later on a day was coming

when every soul should find present what it had done of good and what it had done of evil, and in which every soul would be given recompense of what it had earned.

7. Two Logics: Logic of Understanding and Logic of Sensuousness

The logic of sensuousness calls to worldly benefits and drives one to it. If an action is profitable and man is aware of its profitability, then his senses intensely yearn to do it. If, on the other hand, he does not see any benefit in it then he remains inactive and inert.

The logic of understanding, on the other hand, motivates one to follow the truth, and believes that it is the best thing which may benefit the man, no matter it is accompanied by worldly benefit or not; because that which is with Allāh, is better and more enduring.

To see the difference between the two logics, compare two lines of a poem of 'Antarah (which is based on the logic of sensuousness) with a Qur'ānic verse [on the same subject] based on the logic of understanding.

Antarah says:

And my saying (to my soul) whenever it belched or was agitated:

'(Stay) at your place; you shall either be praised or shall get rest.'

He wants to say: I keep my soul steadfast (whenever it is shaken in dangerous and fearsome war situations) by saying to it: Be calm and remain steadfast; if you are killed, people will praise you for your steadfastness and remaining firm in

the midst of the danger; and if you kill the enemy you will be rid of him and thus get peace of mind. Therefore, remaining steadfast is good in either case.

Check it with the divine words (based on the logic of wisdom): Say: "Nothing will afflict us save what Allāh has ordained for us; He is our Patron; and on Allāh should the believers rely." Say: "Do you await for us but one of the two most excellent things? And we await for you that Allāh will afflict you with punishment from Himself or by our hands. So wait; we too will wait with you." [9:51 - 52].

The believers believe that it is only Allāh Who is their Guardian and Patron; and it is entirely in the hand of Allāh to support and help them. They do not care about whatever good or evil comes to them; they long only for the reward which He has promised them for being submissive to Him and holding fast to His religion. As He says: ... this is because there afflicts them not thirst or fatigue or hunger in Allāh's way, nor do they tread a path which enrages the unbelievers, nor do they attain from the enemy what they attain, but a good work is written down to them on account of it; surely Allāh does not waste the reward of the doers of good. Nor do they spend anything that may be spent; small or great, nor do they traverse a valley, but it is written down to their credit, that Allāh may reward them with the best of what they have done [9:120 - 121].

Accordingly they say to their enemies: If you kill us or do us any harm, we shall get great reward and good result from our Lord; and if we killed you or afflicted you with some misfor-

tune, we shall again get great reward and good result from our Lord in addition to the victory we shall get over you in this world. In either case, we shall be happy and our position is enviable; whatever you await for us is one of the two good things, we shall be successful and happy in either case. But according to your belief, you will attain your goal and will get happiness only in one case, i.e., if you were to vanquish us. We therefore await for you what would displease you, while you await for us only that which would please us, would make us happy.

These, therefore, are the two logics. One tries to build courage and steadfastness on foundation of sensuousness; it teaches that he who would stand firm in battle would get one of the two benefits: either people's admiration and praise or deliverance from enemy; and that too on the condition that there was some benefit in it for the fighter who was exposing himself to danger; if there was no benefit coming to him (e.g., people were not expected to applaud and acclaim him because they did not appreciate war; or did not distinguish faithful service from betrayal; or the service was of a type that they could not know about; or faithfulness and faithlessness were equal in their eyes; or his heart was not at rest by destruction of enemy) then this logic becomes totally ineffective, inoperative and useless.

The above examples cover most of the usual reasons involving injustice and wrong, fraud and crime. An embezzler, when going against the law, says: 'My services are not properly appreciated by the people; a faithful servant and a faithless

one are all equal in their eyes; the faithless one enjoys rather a more pleasant life, his condition is far better than mine.' A criminal thinks that he would surely wriggle out of the clutches of law; that the supervising authorities could not catch him out; his affairs would remain a secret and people would not be able to detect his misdeeds. One who is apathetic and sluggish in establishing the truth and rising against its enemies, and fraternizes with the forces of untruth, offers the plea that standing for truth would humiliate him in people's eyes, the modern world would laugh at him and would look down at him as a relic of the middle ages or the pre-historic times. If you talked to him about spiritual purity and moral decency, he would reply: Of what use to me shall the spiritual purity be if it leads to misery, hardship and shortened life?

On the other hand, the other logic, the Islamic one, has built its structure on following the truth and seeking the reward and recompense from Allāh. As for the worldly aims and goals, they occupy secondary position in its scheme. It is clear that no situation in life can remain out of the above-mentioned basic and primary goal - it is all-encompassing general aim which covers all human activities. According to this logic, every action - be it an act of commission or omission - is done for the pleasure of Allāh, in submission to His will, for following the truth which He has ordained; and He is the Guard, the Knowing that neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep; none can protect from Him, nor anything in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Him; and Allāh is Aware of what you do.

Thus there is for every soul, in whatever it does or fails to do, an Observer, a Witness Who preserves what is done by man. It makes no difference whether the people witness in it not, admire it or not, appreciate it or not.

Islamic training had been so effective that people used to come to the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) and confess to him the sins and crimes they had done in secret, and accepted the penalty and punishment given to them (from death sentence downwards); their only motive being to seek the pleasure of Allāh, and to cleanse their souls from the filth of sins and rust of evil.

If a scholar ponders on those events, he would understand how wonderful the effect of religious training was on the people's souls, and how it had trained them to gladly offer to Allāh the most desired and most important things they had - that is, the life and all that it covers. If this discussion were not Qur'ānic, we would have given some relevant examples from Islamic history.

8. What is the Meaning of seeking Reward from Allāh, and turning away from others? Someone might ask:

To make the reward of the hereafter as the common and primary goal of human social life would entail discarding this life's aims which the human nature invites to; it would destroy the social system and drive people to monasticism. After all, how could it be possible to attach oneself exclusively to one goal and at the same time preserve other important goals too? Is it not a contradictory statement?

Reply: It is an erroneous impression emanating from ignorance of divine wisdom and secrets which the Qur'ān has so clearly described. Islam has based its legislation on the foundation of creation, as we have repeatedly shown in many discourses in this book. Allāh says: Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allāh in which He has made men; there is no alteration (by anyone else) in the creation of Allāh; that is the right religion [30:30].

In short, the series of actual creative causes by linking together have brought the human species into being, and are driving it to its life's goal that is prescribed for it. It is therefore essential for man to develop his life in the framework of free will and struggle, according to the laid down causes to attain his goal, in order that his life does not turn into a battle between cause and goals - otherwise it would lead to destruction and annihilation. This then is the religion of Islam - if the questioner would understand it. Of course, there is one Single Cause above all the causes Who has created all causes and manages all its big and small affairs; and He is Allāh, Who is the Complete Cause above all the causes (in the correct meaning of this word). Man is obliged to surrender to His will and submit to His command. This is what we mean when we say that monotheism is the only foundation of Islamic religion.

It is clear from the above that preserving the belief of monotheism, surrendering to Allāh's will and seeking His pleasure throughout one's life follows entirely the system of

causality by giving everyone his due right - without polytheism or heedlessness. A Muslim has some worldly goals and some Of the hereafter, some material objectives and some spiritual. But he does not involve himself with material or worldly goals more than what is rationally required of him. That is why we find Islam calling to the belief of monotheism, to attach oneself exclusively to Allāh, to have pure belief in Him turning away from every other cause, every other goal; and yet it orders the people to follow the laws of life, to proceed on the path of nature.

Again, it is obvious that it is only the members of Islamic society who are truly happy - both in this world and the next; that their objective - to seek the pleasure of Allāh in all activities - does not conflict with life's other objectives, provided it has the upper hand.

The above discourse removes one more misunderstanding, which has been shown by some sociologists. They think that the reality of religion and its fundamental objective is to establish social justice, and the matters related to divine worship have secondary position - they are mere shoots branching from that root. Whoever therefore establishes social justice is on religion, even if he had no belief nor did he perform any worship.

But if a scholar meditates on the Qur'ān and the sunnah, and especially on the life history of the Prophet, he would at once see through the falsity of this "argument", without any trouble or effort. Moreover, this talk that intends to discard the belief of monotheism and noble virtues from religious

tenets, actually is an attempt to change the religious objective (i.e., belief of monotheism) into secular objective (i.e., material enjoyment); and you have seen that these are two opposite objectives, none of them can be changed into the other - neither in roots, nor in shoots, nor in its fruits.

9. What is the Meaning of Freedom according to Islam?

The word, 'Freedom', in the sense it is used nowadays, is not older than a few centuries. Probably, its genesis dates from the Europeans renaissance a few hundred years ago. Yet, its idea was present in minds - a choicest desire of hearts - since ancient times.

The creative natural basis, which this idea emanates from, is the will the man is equipped with in his existence and which gives rise to his actions; it is a psychological condition nullification of which would nullify perception and sensation, that in its turn would lead to the nullification of humanity.

But man is a social being; his nature drives him to living in society, cooperating with others, co-ordinating his will and aligning his activity with the will and activities of others. This leads him to submit to a law that would regulate people's wills and actions by demarcating proper boundaries for each. The same nature that has given the man freedom of will and action, puts also limitations on that will and action and restricts that initial freedom.

As the modern civil laws have built their regulations on the foundation of material enjoyment - as you have seen - it has resulted in freedom from religion: man is free in matters of basic religious knowledge to adhere to it or not; in moral is-

sues (and in all things beyond the sphere of civil laws) to choose, and act on, whatever he desires. This is what the freedom means in modern times.

But as for the Islam, as you know, it has based its laws on monotheism, and secondarily on noble moral values. Then it has given guidance for all types of personal and social activities, be they big or small; there is nothing related to man but the Islamic shari'ah has a law prescribed for it. Therefore, there is no room here for the freedom (in the above sense).

Of course, it has freed man from the fetters of serving other than Allāh. It is a short sentence; but has a vast meaning. Its significance may be appreciated when you ponder deeply on Islamic system and the practical way of life which it guides to and which it establishes among the society's members and its various classes. Then compare it with what you see of the systems of domination, control and power found in the civilized societies, as between its own members and classes and also between a strong and a weak nation.

As for the Islamic commandments, it has given choice and freedom in all those things which Islam has made lawful of good sustenance and advantages of moderate life without inclining to either extreme. Allāh says: Say: "Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allāh which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?" [7:32]; He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth [2:29]; And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself [45:13].

It is really astonishing to see an exegete labouring to "prove"

freedom of belief in Islam on the evidence of the verses like: There is no compulsion in religion [2:256]. We have explained its true significance in its Commentary in the chapter of The Cow. Here it should be added that, as you know, monotheism is the foundation of all Islamic tenets and beliefs. How is it possible, then, to allow freedom of belief? Is it not just a clear contradiction? The idea of freedom of belief has the same position in Islam as the idea of freedom from the rule of law would have in the civil laws.

Look at it from another angle. Belief (i.e., attainment of affirmative knowledge firmly-rooted in mind) is not a voluntary action of man, so that it could be a subject of permission or prohibition, compulsion or freedom. What can be prohibited or permitted is the action resulting from that belief. For example, propagation of that belief, canvassing for it, writing and publishing it, undermining the opposite belief and activity of the people - these are the things which may be allowed or forbidden.

Obviously if such activities are against the laws of the land, or go against the constitution or principles on which the laws are based, then there is no alternative to prohibiting them by law. The basis of Islamic legislation is the religion of monotheism (the belief in the Oneness of God, the prophethood and the Day of Judgment); it is what is unanimously believed by all the Muslims as well as the People of the Book (i.e., the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians). The Islamic freedom is

confined within this limit. To claim freedom beyond this limit is tantamount to destroy the foundation of religion.

Of course, there is one more freedom, i.e., freedom of describing one's belief for debate or discussion, as we shall explain below in item 14.

10. What is the Way to Change and Perfection in Islamic Society?

It might be said: Agreed that the Islamic system encompasses all that is necessary for a happy life, and that the Islamic society is enviably happy and pleasant. But this system, because of its allpervasiveness and lack of freedom of belief, leads to stagnation of society, retards its evolutionary progress, and blocks the way to change and perfection - and, as they say, it is a serious defect for a society which claims to be perfect. Evolutionary process demands presence of opposite forces in a thing: those forces, through mutual action and reaction [through conflict between an original direction and its direct opposite], would bring about a new position free from the defects of the original forces. If we admit that Islam removes the opposite tenets and especially the beliefs opposed to its fundamentals, then such a society would be brought to a standstill in its evolutionary progress.

COMMENT: It is one of the objections of the dialectical materialism; but it is based on an astonishing confusion. Human knowledge and belief is of two kinds: One, that which accepts change and evolution: these are technical subjects that serve to raise the standard of material life and to subdue the natural forces, e.g., the mathematics, the physics, etc.

Whenever these subjects and technologies would progress from lower to higher level, from defectiveness to perfection, the society would accordingly change and progress.

The other type of knowledge is that which does not accept change - although it accepts perfection in another sense. This is the metaphysical divine knowledge and cognition, that unveils the genesis and resurrection, happiness and unhappiness, etc. It explains these affairs definitely and finally; there is no change or evolution in it - although it accepts development and perfection in the sense of depth and detail. This knowledge and this cognition do not effect societies and ways of life except in a general manner. If this knowledge and these beliefs remain standstill in one condition, it would not cause the society to stop in its developmental progress. We know that we have a lot of general ideas which are unchangeable and static, but they have not hindered the society's progress. For example, we say and believe that man should work to protect his life; that the work should aim at a benefit returning to the man; that man should live within a society; that the universe exists in reality, it is not a delusion; that man is a part of the universe, a part of the planet called the Earth; and that he has got some limbs and organs, some powers and faculties. There are a lot of other such confirmed and unchangeable informations and beliefs, and their unchangeability does not affect the progress of the society, nor does it make the society stagnant. In this category comes the belief that the universe needs, and is created by, One God, Who has ordained for the people a comprehensive law that

combines all the ways of happiness, and which was sent to us through the prophets, and He will gather all people on a day when He will award them the recompense of their deeds. It is the only foundation on which Islam has built its social order, and which it jealously guards. As is known, it is such a proposition that, if made subject to dialectical conflict between thesis and anti-thesis producing a synthesis, it would cause decline and retrogress of the society - as we have explained several times. This is also the case with all real facts and truths related to metaphysics; their rejection cannot do any good to the society, it can bring only its decline and fall.

In short, human society in its evolutionary progress needs day to day change and perfection only in the ways of exploiting natural resources. It takes place through continuing technical research and application of knowledge to practical needs; and Islam does not hinder this process in the least.

As for the changes in the principles of sociology, in the theoretical aspects of social order - like autocratic monarchy, democracy, communism and theories like that - they become necessary only when the prevalent system fails to bring the society nearer to social perfection.

It is not an evolution from defectiveness to perfection. If there is any relation between one theory and the other, it is that of wrong and right, not that of defective and perfect, nor of undeveloped and developed. Now suppose that a social order is firmly established exactly as man's nature desires, i.e., on social justice; people under its beneficial training are equipped with useful knowledge and good deeds; then en-

hancing the level of the knowledge and activities, they are proceeding joyfully and energetically towards their happiness; in this way they are continuously perfecting themselves and increasing the sphere of their happiness and felicity. What is the need, in this case, to change such a social order?

What do they want more than that? No thinking person will say that man must change every thing around himself even if there is no need for any change.

Objection: You cannot avoid change even in those things which you claim to be above the change, like beliefs, noble ethics, etc. All these things do change with the passage of time when social conventions change and new environment replaces the old. No one can deny that the thinkings of modern man are so different from those of the ancient ones. Likewise, his ideas are affected by variation in his habitat, i.e., whether he lives in equatorial, polar or moderate zone. Also, his way of life affects his thinking, depending on whether he is a boss or a servant, a Bedouin or a townsman, prosperous or unprosperous, rich or poor and so on. No doubt, ideas and opinions differ with difference in influencing factors, and change when the times change.

Reply: This objection is based on the theory of relativity of human knowledge and ideas. According to this theory, truth and falsehood, good and evil, are relative affairs. General theoretical knowledge concerned with genesis and resurrection, as well as general practical opinions (e.g., the proposition that society is good for man, or that justice is a virtue - a general proposition, not as applied to practical conditions) have only

relative values which always change with the change of time, environment and conditions. But we have described in another place falsity of this theory in its generality.²¹

The sum total of our discourse there was that this theory does not cover general theoretical propositions and a part of general practical ideas.

It is enough to show invalidity of generality of this theory that: If we agree that this theory is in fact general, unrestricted and unchangeable, then it entails acceptance of [at least] one unrestricted general proposition that is not relative - and that is this theory, this proposition, itself.

Alternatively, if we say that it is not an unrestricted generality, but only a partially correct proposition, then it proves - as a concomitant - existence of unrestricted general propositions. Thus, the theory is not general, in any case. In other words, if it is correct that 'Every opinion and belief must change at some time', then this theory itself must change one day, i.e., there should be some beliefs and opinions that will never change. (Think it over.)

11. Is Islamic Shari'ah competent to bring happiness in the modern Life?

Someone might ask: Let us say that Islam had provided comprehensive guidance for all situations of life as it was in those days when the Qur'ān was revealed; and was thus able to lead that society to its true happiness and to all its ambitions. But times have changed; and so have the ways of human life. The culture and mechanical life of modern civilization is totally different from the simple life of fourteen centu-

ries ago that was confined to primitive natural resources. Now man, as a result of his long and arduous struggles, has reached a level of development and civilization which, if compared to his condition of a few centuries earlier, would look like a comparison between two different species. How can the laws made to regulate the life of that time solve the problems of modern times' complicated and ingenious life?

How can either of the societies take the burden of the other on itself?

Reply: Obviously, there is difference between the two eras - in the forms of life. But it does not mean difference in general principles and substance of life. What has changed is not the principle, but its application. Man even today needs food to eat, clothes to wear, house to live in, means of transportation to carry him and his goods from one place to another, and a society to belong to, as well as associations and connections of various types - sexual, commercial, technical, professional, etc. This need is general and universal; it will not change as long as man is man with this nature and physique, as long as his is a human life. There is no difference in this matter between a primitive man and a modern one. The difference is only in the means and equipments which he uses to satisfy his material needs. The primitive man used to eat fruits, vegetables and game meat, which he obtained in simple ways. Today he has got thousands of preparations for food and drink, of various qualities beneficial to his nature, different colours pleasing to his eyes, various flavours delicious to his taste, attractive shapes and forms pleasant to his touch, with a lot of

other variations in its specifications. But all this variation does not change the basic reality that both categories are food, which man eats to satiate his hunger and satisfy his desire.

These general conditions and ideas of man have not changed with the change of times; it is only their applications that have taken other shapes. In the same way, the general laws of Islam - that have been laid down according to the demand of nature for attainment of happiness - are not nullified just because a new means has replaced the old one, if the conformity with basic nature is not affected, if the new means has not deviated from nature. But if there is any conflict with the nature, then Islamic system never agrees with it, neither in old days nor in modern times.

As for rules concerned with day to day affairs and happenings, which by their nature are subject to rapid change, like monetary and administrative matters related to defence, means of communications, transport, municipal affairs and things like that - they are left to the discretion of the ruler. A ruler has the same position within his domain as a head of the family has within his family. The ruler may take decisions about these matters as the family head may do for his family. The ruler may decide about the internal and external affairs of his country - regarding war or peace, financial or other matters - keeping in view the interest of the society, after holding consultations with the Muslims. As Allāh says: and take counsel with them in the affairs; but when you have decided, then place your trust in Allāh [3:159]. All this concerns the public affairs.

However, these rules and decisions are of specific nature, not general.

They may change according to the situation and condition; policies may change because of new factors coming up and old ones going away. But divine rules are not so, they do not come and go; they are based on the Book and the sunnah, and they are not subject to abrogation. (Its detail will be given somewhere else.)

12. Who is entitled to rule over the Islamic Society? What Characteristics he should have?

The authority to rule over the Islamic society belonged to the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.); and the Qur'ān clearly says that the people were obliged to obey him and follow his commands.

Allāh says:

And obey Allāh and obey the Messenger [64:12];

... that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught you [4:105];

The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves [33:6];

Say: "If you love Allāh, then follow me, Allāh will love you" [3:31].

There are many such verses that describe one or the other aspects of his all-encompassing general authority over the Islamic society.

The best way to understand this reality is to study deeply the life of the Prophet and then to ponder collectively on the verses revealed about ethics and laws covering the divine

worship, mutual dealings, politics, and other common and social affairs. The picture that will appear on his mind from the sum total of this divine revelation will speak more eloquently than that which may be seen from one or two sentences.

There is another point that a research scholar must keep in mind.

Generally the verses dealing with the subjects of the rites of worship, fighting in the way of Allāh, enforcement of the penal code and other such subjects are addressed to the believers collectively, not especially to the Prophet. For example:

... and establish prayers ... [4:77];

... and strive hard in His way ... [5:35];

... and give upright testimony for Allāh ... [65:2];

... fasting has been prescribed for you ... [2:183];

And spend in the way of Allāh ... [2:195];

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong [3:104];

And strive hard in (the way of) Allāh a striving as is due to Him ... [22:78];

(As for) the fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them, (giving) a hundred stripes ... [24:2];

And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands ... [5:38];

And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation ... [2:179];

And hold fast by the cord of Allāh all together and be not divided ... [3:103];

... that establish the religion and be not divided therein ...

[42:13];

And Muhammad is no more than a messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allāh in the least; and Allāh will reward the grateful [3:144].

There are many verses of this nature, and all taken together make it clear that the religion is a collective matter which Allāh has made people responsible for; He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants; and He intends only that all of them together should establish the religion. The society of which they are members should be managed by themselves - none of them should be less responsible than the others. Enforcement of law is not an especial prerogative of some to the exclusion of the others - be he the Prophet or the others. Allāh says: That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other [3:195]. The verse is unrestricted; and it shows that Allāh has kept in consideration the natural effect the members of the Islamic society have on their social order - He cares for it in legislation as He has done in creation. He will not let it waste. He says: Surely the land is Allāh's; He causes such of His servants to inherit it as He pleases, and the end is for those who fear (Allāh) [7:128].

Of course, to the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) belongs the mission, the guidance and the training. Allāh says: ... who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom ... [62:2]. He was ap-

pointed by Allāh to look after the ummah, and manage its affairs in this world as in the hereafter, and he continued to lead them as long as he was alive.

But one should not forget that this system was totally different from a monarchic rule - the rule which treats Allāh's wealth as personal booty of the monarch, and the servants of Allāh as his slaves; giving him full authority to do with them whatever he wants and rule over them in any way he pleases. Nor was it like the social orders based on the principle of material enjoyment, like democracy, etc.; because there are so many distinguishing factors that separate Islam from these systems, and which have left no room for any mix-up.

One of the greatest differences is found in the fact that these societies, being based on material enjoyment, are motivated by the spirit of exploitation and utilization. It is another name of man's arrogance, that wants everything - even other human beings - subjugated to his will and actions. It permits him to take any route to reach that end; to use any means to get what he desires, to acquire what he wants. In olden days it was known as despotic monarchy; now it appears before our eyes wearing the mask of development and civilization. We are daily witnessing the oppressions, injustices and arrogance meted out by strong nations to the weaker ones; is there any need to remind ourselves of their tyrannies and high-handedness recorded in the histories?

A Pharaoh, a Caesar or a Kisra behaved despotically towards weaker sections of his reign, and played with their lives, properties and dignity in any way he liked. His excuse - if any

excuse was ever offered - was that it was a necessary ingredient of rulership which contributed to the efficiency of government and strengthened the Kingdom. He believed that it was a tribute due to his outstanding qualities, to his sovereign status - and his sword spoke for him. Exactly the same thing is happening even now. Look at political relationships of today's strong nations with the weak ones; you will find the history repeating itself. Of course, the sceptre previously held by an individual is now carried collectively by the society, but the spirit is the same and the ambition unchanged.

On the other hand, Islamic system is free of such ambitions and desires; and its proof may be found in the life of the Prophet as evidenced by his conquests and treaties.

Another difference: No human society, that ever appeared on the stage of history, was free from various types of disparity among its members, a factor that always led to discord and chaos. If there are various strata, different classes, in society, it is ultimately bound to destroy the social order: when a few persons hoard treasures of wealth while the common people do not get necessities of life; when elites or nobles get all the privileges which public is deprived of; when so-called "public servants" become overlords of the country, then the nation is bound to fall into perdition.

Islamic society presents a pleasant contrast. It is a social order whose parts are all alike; no one has precedence over the others; there is no privileged class, no dignified lords, no distinguished group. If there is any distinction it is the one loudly demanded by human nature; it is the superiority ac-

corded to piety - and it is a factor which is in Allāh's hand to decide, men have nothing to do with it. Allāh says: O you people! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allāh is the one among you who is most pious [49:13]; therefore hasten to (do) good works [2:148]. The ruler and the ruled, the leader and the follower, the superior and the subordinate, the free man and the slave, the man and the woman, the rich and the poor, the big and the small, all of them have equal status in Islam. The legal code is equally applied to all; there is no class at all in social affairs and civil aspects - as may be seen in the life of the Prophet.

A third distinction: The executive power in Islam is not confined within a separate class; implementation of Islamic laws is the responsibility of all members of the society. Each and every individual is obligated to call to the good, to enjoin what is good and forbid the evil.

There are many other distinguishing features which a research scholar may easily find out.

This was the condition during the lifetime of the Prophet. As for the subsequent period, the majority of the Muslims believe that it is the Muslims who have the right to choose a caliph to rule over the society; but the Shī'ī Muslims believe that the caliph must be appointed by Allāh and His Messenger, and that they are the twelve Imāms (as explained in detail in theological books).

In any case, there is no doubt that in these days, when the Prophet has died and the twelfth Imām is in occultation, the authority of the Islamic government lies in the hands of the Muslims themselves. It may be inferred from the Divine Book that they are required to appoint a ruler for the Islamic society according to the tradition established by the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) - and that is the tradition of imāmah, not of monarchy or imperialism. That ruler has the responsibility of enforcing the Islamic laws without any change. As for other matters - apart from the laid down laws - he has to manage the affairs with consultations according to the time and situation.

The proof of the above may be inferred from the verses describing the overall authority of the Prophet when read in conjunction with the verse, Certainly there is for you in the Messenger of Allāh an excellent example ... [33:21].

13. The Boundary of Islamic State is Ideology and Belief, not physical Landmarks, nor Man-made Borders

Islam has totally refused the theory of national separateness to have any effect or influence on the society. What is the basic factor of nationalism? It has emanated from nomadism and tribal and clannish way of life; another influencing factor was the physical differences in regions or habitat where various groups lived. These two - nomadic wanderings and natural differences in various geographical regions, like hot or cold climate, barrenness or fertility of land, and other features like that - led to the division of mankind into various clans

and tribes, as well as to the differences in their languages and colours, as has been explained in its place.

Later these two factors led every group to take possession of the piece of land or region where they lived - it depended on their endeavour and strength. They reserved it for themselves, called it their "home country"; gradually they came to love it and repulse the intruders from it with all their powers.

Although this phenomenon came into being for satisfying a natural need, yet it contained a characteristic which was diametrically opposed to the demand of basic human nature, that is, the demand that mankind should live as one single society. It is self-evident that nature wants various scattered powers to join hands and unite, in order that they may get strengthened by that consolidation and union; it will help it to attain its desired good purpose in the best and most perfect way. We may observe this phenomenon in the upward progress of primary matter - it appears first as an element, then passing through different stages it becomes a vegetable, then an animal, then a human being.

When mankind is divided according to the countries people live in, then inhabitants of a country join hands together and unite as citizens of that country; as a result they are separated from other nationalities. They together constitute a "nation", a unit that is totally separate - in body and spirit - from other nations, other units. In this manner, humanity is deprived of its unity and wholeness; and is afflicted by discord, difference and disunity - the very trap which it wanted to avoid. Now this "new" unit starts treating other "new" units

(i.e. other nations) in the same way as it treats other natural things; i.e., it wants to exploit and subjugate other nations. The experience - from the early dawn of humanity to this day - testifies to this truth; and the same theme may be inferred from many verses quoted in earlier discourses.

That is why Islam has discarded these differences, divisions, and separations altogether; and has based the society on the foundation of faith and belief, instead of race, origin, domicile or other such considerations. Even in such matters as matrimony and consanguinity, the criterion for the conjugal rights and inheritance is not the the home or country, but identity of monotheistic belief.

The best proof for this reality may be seen in various facets of this religion's laws, as it has not neglected any aspect of human life without giving a clear direction for it. If the Islamic society is dominating over the world, then the Muslims are obligated to establish the religion and not be disunited. If it is oppressed and overpowered, then again they must try to revive and revitalize the Islam, and to raise its prestige as much as they can. Even if there is only one Muslim in a place, it is his duty to hold fast to the religion, to act according to its laws and to implement it as much as he can - even if it is only by having belief in the heart and praying just by gestures.

It is clear from the above that the Islamic society has been framed in such a way that it can be lived in all conditions, and in every situation - no matter whether Muslims are rulers or ruled, victorious or vanquished, advanced or backward, conspicuous or hidden, powerful or powerless.

Particularly, the Qur'ānic verses dealing with the subject of at-taqiyyah (التَّقِيَّةُ = dissimulation of one's religion under duress or in face of threatening harm or damage) make this reality abundantly clear. Allāh says: He who disbelieves in Allāh after his having believed, not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith ... [16:106]; ... except when you guard yourselves against them for fear of them ... [3:28]; Therefore fear Allāh as much as you can [64:16]; O you who believe! fear Allāh with the fear which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims [3:102].

14. Islam cares for social Order in all its Aspects

The verse under discussion, O you who believe! be patient, and help each other in patience and remain lined up, and fear Allāh, that you may be successful, proves this fact (as explained earlier) apart from many other verses.

Islam makes it a point to establish collectivity in every law and rule which can be observed jointly or performed collectively in relevant manner, ordering and exhorting the Muslims in a way that would lead to the desired goal. A research scholar should look at it from two angles:

First: One should keep in view the difference in degrees of emphasis on collectivity. The Law-Giver has ordained joint efforts directly in jihād to the extent that is necessary for the defence. This is the highest category. Then fasting and hajj have been made obligatory for everyone who is able to do so (and has no genuine excuse for exemption); and as a concomitant people are bound to gather together for these two rites

of worship; then they have been sealed by the two 'ids and their prayers.

Then come the daily five-time prayers which are obligatory for every adult and sane Muslim, but congregation is not compulsory in them.

Even then, one congregational prayer has been made obligatory once a week on Fridays within a radius of one farsakh (الْفَرْسَخُ = a distant of 6000 yards). So it is another category.

Second: As we have seen, Islam has prescribed congregation for some things directly. Further we find that in some other things it has put emphasis on gathering and collectivity without making it directly obligatory, e.g., obligatory prayers performed in congregation; it is sunnah and highly recommended, as it is a tradition established by the Prophet, and people are exhorted to establish the Prophet's traditions.²² The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) once said about a group of the Muslims who avoided coming to the congregational prayer: "We are on the verge of ordering - about a group that has left praying in the mosque - that firewood be brought and put on their doors; then fire be kindled over them and their houses be burnt down on them." That is the way to be followed in all the traditions established by the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.); the Muslims are obligated to preserve his traditions by all possible means and at all costs.

These are the subjects related to ijtihād based on the Book [of Allāh] and the sunnah; and their explanations and details may be seen in the Islamic Jurisprudence.

Now that we know that Islam emphasizes collectivity in all laws (rites of worship, mutual dealings, and political affairs) which it has laid down for the people, as well as in noble manners and basic beliefs, the time has come to turn our eyes to another direction, that is, the collectivity of Islam in its basic knowledge and fundamental gnosis.

We find that Islam invites the people to the natural religion on the ground that it is the manifest truth in which there is no doubt. There are numerous Qur'ānic verses of this theme, which need not be quoted here.

This in itself is the first step in joining and uniting different minds; because people - in spite of their differences, and their attachments to various customs and characteristics - are united in the belief that: "Truth must be followed".

Then we see that Islam accepts the excuse of a person for whom the proof has not been furnished, and the path not made clear, even though he might have heard some arguments. Allāh says: ... that he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof ... [8:42]; Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way (to escape); so these, it may be, Allāh will pardon them, and Allāh is Pardoning, Forgiving [4:99]. Look at the unrestrictedness of the verse and the position of the clause, "who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way". These words give complete freedom to every thinker (who is able to think, examine and research) to meditate on matters connected with religious cognition and to ponder on them

deeply. Moreover, the Qur'ānic verses are full of exhortation to meditate, contemplate and ruminate.

It is not a secret that various internal and external factors affect people's thinking in different ways - in its imagination and confirmation as well as in its achievements and decisions. Consequently, it leads to difference in those fundamental principles upon which the Islamic society is based (as we have earlier explained).

However, the difference in understanding of two persons (as explained in psychology, ethics and sociology) emanates from one of the following factors:

1. It may issue from the difference in psychological traits and intrinsic characteristics - be they good or bad. Such factors have great effect on human knowledge and cognition, because they affect intellectual capacity and ability. The perception and intellectual performance of an upright and just man cannot be compared to that of a headstrong tyrant; a moderate and dignified person will receive knowledge in a way that cannot be imitated by a rash, prejudiced and narrow-minded man; nor by a barbarian who follows every Tom, Dick and Harry; nor by a misguided person who does not know where he is rushing to or what is going to happen to him. This difference can easily be overcome through religious training. This training agrees with religious principles and cognitions, and creates such characteristics that conform with those principles, i.e., noble virtues. Allāh says: ... a Book revealed after Mūsā verifying that which is before it, guiding to the truth and to a right path [46:30]; With it Allāh guides him

who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to the straight path [5:16]; And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways; and Allāh is most surely with the doers of good [29:69]. The relevance of these verses with the subject matter is obvious.

2. Or it may be a result of the difference in actions. Anti-truth activities like sins and various kinds of lust, temptations and wicked thoughts, teach a man - especially if he is simple-minded - wrong ideas; and prepare his mind for infiltration of doubts and penetration of erroneous thoughts. In this way is created difference in thinking and resistance against the truth.

Islam has laid down some rules to overcome this difficulty:

Firstly, it has obligated the society to call the people to the religion - continuously;

Secondly, it has ordered the society to enjoin the good and forbid the evil;

Thirdly and lastly, it has made it compulsory to dissociate from deviating persons and doubting groups.

Allāh says: And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong ... [3:104]. Inviting to good would confirm the true belief and let its roots grow deep in the hearts - through constant teachings and reminders. Then enjoining what is right and forbidding the evil would erase adverse traits that could prevent the true belief from taking root. Also Allāh says: And when you see those who engage in vain discourses about Our

signs, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse; and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people.

And nothing of the reckoning of their (deeds) shall be upon those who guard (against evil), but (theirs) is only to remind, haply they may guard.

And leave those who have taken their religion for a play and an idle sport, and whom this world's life has deceived, and remind (them) thereby lest a soul should be fettered with what it has earned ... [6:68 - 70]. Here Allāh admonishes the Muslims not to join in a discourse that aims at creating doubt, directing objections or casting aspersions upon religious facts, and divine realities - even if by allusion or implication.

He reminds us that it can happen only if man does not take his religion seriously, treats it only as a vain sport or on idle game; it happens when man is beguiled by this transient life; and it may be remedied only through good training and constant reminder of Allāh's majesty.

3. Or this difference may be a result of some extraneous factors; for example, if the man lives in a remote corner where the message of true faith has not reached; or has reached only superfluously or in a distorted form. Or if the man does not have enough understanding to properly grasp the realities of religion, as in the case of idiots or simpletons.

Islam has prescribed for it two remedies: the propagation of religion should cover each and every corner of the world, and the people should be invited to Islam patiently with politeness and good manners. These two factors are the especi-

alities of Islam's missionary activities. Allāh says: Say: "This is my way: I invite (you) to Allāh; with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me ... " [12:108]. It is known that a proficient and discerning speaker gauges how much his words would influence a man, what would be their effect on different people of different types; therefore, he speaks only what would be listened to. The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) has said - and it has been narrated by both sects: "We, the group of prophets, talk with people according to the measure of their understanding." Allāh says: ... why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire (proper) understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious? [9:122].

These in short, are various ways for avoiding difference in belief, and of removing the difference if it appears.

Islam has also laid down a further sociological rule to prevent the difference creeping into the society (which could lead to disorder and weakness of the social order). Allāh says: And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will scatter you away from His way; this He has enjoined you with that you may guard (against evil) [6:153]. This verse makes it clear that if they remained united in following the straight path, and cautious against following the other ways, they would be saved from disunity; and their unity and identity would be preserved. Again He says: O you who believe! fear Allāh with the fear which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are

Muslims. And hold fast by the cord of Allāh all together and be not divided ... [3:102 - 103]. It has already been explained that "the cord of Allāh" refers to the Qur'ān which explains the realities of religion, or to the Qur'ān and the Messenger (s.a.w.a.) together, as may be inferred from the verses preceding these: O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book, they will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed. But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allāh are recited, and among you is His Messenger. And whoever holds fast to Allāh, he indeed is guided to the straight path [3:100 - 101].

These verses emphasize the importance of unity in religious beliefs, identity of ideas and ideals and cooperation in seeking and imparting knowledge. Whenever the people are confronted with a new ideology or assailed with a doubt, they should resort to the Qur'ān that is recited to them, and meditate on it, so that the roots of difference are pulled out.

Allāh says: Do they not then meditate on the Qur'ān? And if it were from any other than Allāh, they would have found in it many a discrepancy [4:82]; And these examples, We set them forth for the people and none understand them but the learned [29:43]; so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know [16:43]. The verses show that differences may be removed by meditating on the Qur'ān or by referring the matter to those who do meditate.

Also, they prove that referring to the Messenger - and he has the overall responsibility of religion - would remove the

discord and disunity from the society and explain the truth which they were obligated to follow. Allāh says: ... and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect [16:44]. Nearly the same is the import of the verse: ... and if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who (can) draw out (the truth) in it, would have known it ... [4:83]; O you who believe! obey Allāh and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything; refer it to Allāh and the Messenger if you believe in Allāh and the last day; this is better and very good in the end [4:59].

This then is the picture of collective thinking in Islam.

The above discourse also shows that this religion allows the people complete freedom of thought in the same way as it safeguards the especial divine cognition. The way shown by it is as follows:

It is obligatory for the Muslims to meditate on the realities of religion and to try their utmost to think and research for its cognition - collectively and in cooperation with each other. They should not be worried if in this process they are assailed with a doubt or conflicting pointers. What is required in this case is to review his doubt or thought with the help of the Qur'ān - through collective meditation. If that does not remove the trouble, then he should refer it to the Messenger or his successor so that his doubt is removed, and (if it was not valid then) its invalidity is explained to him. Allāh says: Those

who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; these are they whom Allāh has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding [39:18].

Freedom of belief and thought (as we have described above) is something different from the freedom to propagate that idea or belief before referring it to the Qur'ān and the Messenger or his successors.

Such propaganda would lead to disunity and discord which in its turn would damage the foundation of the healthy society.

What has been mentioned above is the best possible system for running the society's affairs, inasmuch as it opens the door to intellectual development, and at the same time preserves man's personal freedom.

On the other hand, imposition of belief on the people, putting seals on their hearts, crushing the thinking power of men by suppression and oppression, and keeping them in line through whip or sword, anathema or excommunication, boycott or banishment - far be it from Islam to allow or agree to such tactics. In fact, such tactics were and are the trademark of the Christianity. The history of the Church is replete with its misdeeds, misconducts and high-handedness - particularly between the fifth and the sixteenth centuries of the Christian era. You would look in vain for any parallel in history to the tyrannies, oppressions and cruelties perpetrated by the Christian Church.

Regrettably, we Muslims are now deprived of this bounty and its concomitants (i.e., collective thinking and freedom of

belief), just as we have been deprived of many other great bounties which Allāh had bestowed on us. It is because we have fallen short of our duties towards Allāh; and Allāh does not change the condition of a people unless they change their own condition. Now, the churchly behaviour has taken root in our society, with the result that there is disharmony among the hearts and discord in the society; and various sects and groups have raised their heads. May Allāh forgive us, and help us to do what He is pleased with, and guide us to His straight path.

15. The true Religion will ultimately prevail over the world

The good end belongs to piety, to fear of Allāh. Human species, by its nature that is ingrained in it, is seeking its true happiness looking for its real felicity. In other words, it is striving to sit firmly on the throne of its spiritual-cum-physical life - a social life that would give the soul its full share in this world as well as in the hereafter. We have already told you that it is what is known as Islam, the religion of monotheism.

There have appeared there deviations in humanity's march towards its destination, in its ascension to the pinnacle of perfection. But it happens not because the nature has lost its hold, but simply because of some error of judgment, some mistake in applying a principle to a particular situation. The goal decided by creative nature has to be reached sooner or later, it cannot be avoided. Allāh says: Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allāh in which He has made men; there is

no alteration in the creation of Allāh; that is the right religion, but most people do not know. (That is, they do not have its detailed knowledge, although their nature is aware of it in a general way.) ... So as to be ungrateful for what We have given them; but enjoy yourselves (for a while), for you shall soon come to know ... Mischief has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return [30:30

- 41]. Again He says: ... then soon Allāh will bring a people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, humble before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allāh's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer [5:54]; And certainly We did write in the Zabūr after the reminder that the earth shall inherit it My righteous servants [21:105]; and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil) [20:132]. These and similar other verses tell us clearly that Islam is bound to prevail, appearing one day in its most perfect and complete form; and then it will rule over the world.

Question: Islam appeared on the world's stage at a certain time; it was a link in the chain of history, and it left its effects on the succeeding links. The modern civilization is, wittingly or unwittingly, much indebted to Islam. In spite of that, it is just a wishful thinking that Islam would prevail over the world, that this religion - with all its elements, in its complete form - would ever rule over the earth and attain its goals. It is a proposition which human nature does not accept and would never agree with. Moreover, it, has never been tested in this

role, so that we may say that it could really happen and that Islam could ever dominate over the humanity.

Reply: This objection is untenable. We have explained earlier that Islam - in the meaning we have been using it for - is the final destination of mankind, the perfection of humanity to which it is driven by nature; it makes no difference whether man recognizes that goal in its full details or not. Definite experiences, obtained from other species, prove that every species is proceeding towards the goal which is relevant to its being; it is driven to its final destination by the system of creation - and man is not an exception to this universal rule.

Moreover, no system, no "ism", that had ever prevailed, or now prevails, in any human society, was ever proved by any previous experiment before it was enforced. Look at the shari'ahs brought by Nūh, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and 'Īsā - they just appeared on the scene and were implemented. The same was the case with the laws brought by Brahma, Buddha, Māni and others. In the same way, the secular systems, like democracy and communism, etc., were established in various societies in different manners - all without any previous experimentation.

What is required for a social system to be established and to take its roots, is a group of persons with courage of their convictions, endowed with firm determination and high ideals, who would not rest until they have reached their goal; who would not tire, would not be weakened;

who would not be assailed by doubts and misgivings about their ultimate success; they would never entertain the idea that perchance they could fail, that perhaps their endeavours

would not succeed. They would go on trying determinedly until they have succeeded. This principle applies everywhere, and it makes no difference whether the goal itself is divine or Satanic.

TRADITIONS

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, O you who believe! be patient and help each other in patience and remain lined up: "Have patience in misfortunes, and help each other to be patient in trial (and temptation) and be lined up with him whom you follow." (Ma'ani'l-akhbaar)

The same Imam said: "Be patient about your religion, and have patience against your enemy and be linked up to your Imam" (at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi)

The author says: Nearly the same theme has been narrated from the Prophet through the Sunni chains.

The same Imam said: "Be patient about the obligatory commandments, and help each other to be patient in misfortunes, and be linked up to the Imams." (al-Kafi)

'Ali (a.s.) said: "Be lined up for the prayers." He said: "That is, remain waiting for them, because (the system of) garrisoning did not exist at that time." (Majma'u'l-bayan).

The author says: The difference in the tradition springs from the generality of the orders, as we had mentioned earlier.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Hayyan have narrated from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: 'Should not I guide you to that by which Allah erases the mistakes and covers the sins?' We said: 'Yes, in-

deed, O Messenger of Allah!' He said: 'To perform al-wudu' properly in spite of inconveniences, and to walk many times to the mosques, and to wait for the (next) prayer after the prayer; so that is the lining up.'" (ad-Durru'l-manthur)

The author says: (as-Suyuti) has narrated it from the Prophet, also through other chains. There are innumerable traditions about excellence of being lined up or linked up.

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